UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.109/PV.1398
19 February 1992

ENGLISH

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 1398th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 5 February 1992, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea)

- Opening of the session by the Secretary-General
- Statement by the Secretary-General
- Election of officers
- Organization of work (A/AC.109/L.1774 and L.1775)
- Cooperation with intergovernmental organizations

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages, preferably in the same language as the text to which they refer. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also, if possible, incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent, within one week of the date of this document, to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, Department of Conference Services, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

Any corrections to the records of this meeting and of other meetings will be issued in a corrigendum.

92-60224 8352V (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I declare open the 1992 session of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I should first like to express my appreciation to the Acting Chairman, Ambassador Alarcon de Quesada of Cuba, and to all the other members of the Committee for the effective way in which they are carrying out their mandate and for their concern and commitment regarding the future of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and their peoples.

For over 30 years the Special Committee has sought to advance the inalienable rights of colonial peoples to self-determination and independence and to promote the full exercise of those rights, as set forth in the Charter and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

The Committee's efforts have met with great success. More than 50 Non-Self-Governing Territories and Trust Territories have exercised their right to self-determination. The large majority have chosen independence, while the others have opted for free association, integration or other status in conformity with resolution 1541 (XV). None the less, more remains to be done, as the Committee is responsible for ensuring the implementation of the Declaration in 18 Territories which remain on its agenda.

The General Assembly at its forty-sixth session adopted resolution 46/181, entitled "International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism", in which it reaffirmed that the peoples of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories have the inalienable right to self-determination and independence,

(The Secretary-General)

in accordance with the Charter, the Declaration and other relevant resolutions and decisions. The General Assembly also adopted a Plan of Action which aims to achieve a world free from colonialism by the beginning of the twenty-first century. These resolutions underline the importance Member States attach to the decolonization process.

(spoke in French)

As regards the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, the General Assembly has continuously reaffirmed that problems caused by the interplay of such factors as their size, remoteness, geographical dispersion, vulnerability to natural disasters, fragility of ecosystems, transportation and communications constraints and lack of natural resources should not prevent their peoples from exercising their right to self-determination and independence.

The question of Western Sahara is a matter of particular concern to the international community. Under the guidance of the Security Council, which remains seized of the question, I shall actively pursue the efforts of the United Nations, in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity, to find a peaceful, just and lasting solution. In the past two days I have had positive contacts with the two protagonists in the conflict, and those contacts have been most productive.

I am convinced that the new international climate will help the Committee's activities to ensure that the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories can exercise their right to self-determination and independence. Moreover, the Plan of Action to eliminate colonialism should give a new impetus to its work, guiding it towards the final objective of complete, definitive decolonization before the year 2000.

(The Secretary-General)

More than ever before conditions now seem favourable for each of the partners in the decolonization process to play its role and to cooperate fully in this joint undertaking - that is, for the administering Powers, on the one hand, to provide current and precise information on economic, social and educational conditions in the Territories they administer and to invite the United Nations to visit those Territories more frequently; for the peoples of the Territories, on the other hand, to cooperate more closely with the bodies entrusted with decolonization; so that the specialized agencies and other bodies associated with the United Nations can increase their assistance to the Territories, while taking into consideration their specific needs; and, finally, for the Special Committee to adjust its approach and thereby strengthen trust and cooperation with the administering Powers.

I am convinced that you will spare no effort to further the objectives of the United Nations in discharging the noble task entrusted to you. As you begin your work in 1992 I assure you of my full cooperation and wish you every success in carrying out your mission.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I understand that members of the Committee are in agreement that the following representatives should be elected Committee officers for the coming year: Ambassador Renagi Renagi Lohia of Papua New Guinea as the Chairman of the Committee; Ambassador Ricardo Alarcon de Quesada of Cuba, Mr. Alexander Slaby of Czechoslovakia and Mr. Andrew G. Bangali of Sierra Leone as the three Vice-Chairmen; and Mr. Mohammad Najdat Shaheed of the Syrian Arab Republic as the Rapporteur.

Accordingly, I declare those representatives elected unanimously to their respective posts.

I extend my warm congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the other members of the Bureau. I look forward to working closely with all of you in the coming months.

I now invite Ambassador Lohia and Mr. Shaheed to take their places on the podium.

Mr. Lohia (Papua New Guinea) took the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN: First and foremost, may I, on behalf of the Special Committee, express not only our deep appreciation and gratitude to you, Mr. Secretary-General, for having convened the Committee's 1992 session, but also to welcome you warmly to the work of the Committee for the first time.

I would also like to extend to you our sincere congratulations upon your assumption of the high office of Secretary-General. There has never been a time like this in international relations. There is a convergence of views and efforts to infuse international and regional problem-solving with a spirit of cooperation. That spirit was amply demonstrated by the first-ever summit of the Security Council, held here at United Nations Headquarters at the

(The Chairman)

highest political level on 31 January 1992. The Heads of State or Government pledged their full support to you, Mr. Secretary-General, in all your efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security.

I as Chairman, and the other members of the Committee, would like to assure you of our full cooperation and support in your endeavours, and especially in the field of decolonization. The inauguration of our current session by you, Sir, signifies the importance you personally attach to the role of decolonization in international affairs and to the work of this Committee.

I would like now to thank the members of the Special Committee for electing me as Chairman of this body. I consider my election to this important position a tribute to and a recognition of my country's steadfast commitment to the struggle of colonial countries and peoples for freedom, self-determination and independence. I feel deeply honoured at receiving the trust members have bestowed upon me, and have every intention of discharging my duties as Chairman of this important Committee in a manner commensurate with their commitment to the cause of decolonization and with the wishes and expectations of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

As members well know, my country, Papua New Guinea, is an island country situated in the South Pacific, where some of the remaining 18 Non-Self-Governing Territories are to be found. In his opening remarks at the United States-Pacific Island Nations Summit, at Heads of Government level, held in Hawaii on 27 October 1990, President Bush saw the Pacific in this way:

(The Chairman)

"Today when we look at the Pacific we see more than small island nations with tiny populations. In the words of Ambassador Lohia of Papua New Guinea, we see an aquatic continent covering a third of the Earth's surface.

"Reaching out from the west coast to American Samoa and our other island jurisdictions, the United States is a coequal member with you in the Pacific's 'extended family'. We belong to and share this great aquatic continent with you, our partners in peace. The Pacific no longer divides us; it binds us together in a community of flourishing democracies."

I am quite sure that President Bush would express similar sentiments for the Caribbean community, where the other remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories are found. Both the Caribbean and the Pacific communities share many similarities, apart from being sea-locked island countries and territories.

The Charter clearly states that respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples is one of the means to promote friendly relations among nations and much-needed economic and social development. To ensure respect for that principle, no less than three Chapters of the Charter - Chapters XI, XII and XIII - are devoted to the Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories. Our commitment to further the process of decolonization, therefore, is rooted in obligations arising from the Charter itself.

In your acceptance address to the General Assembly on 3 December 1991, Mr. Secretary-General, you eloquently stated that

"There are many areas of tension, conflict and confrontation on the international scene, areas where blood has been shed, where human

(The Chairman)

creativity is destroyed, and where the spirit of cooperation, integration and good-neighbourliness faces grave challenges. There are also peoples that are still denied the exercise of their inalienable rights". (A/46/PV.59, p. 12)

You also stressed

"the need for an active preventive diplomacy with a view to monitoring developments of crises and finding adequate means to defuse them and prevent their escalation". (ibid.)

In the past we have witnessed colonial situations characterized by confrontation, war and suffering which at times constituted a threat to international peace and security. The Security Council has been seized of such questions and has sought a peaceful resolution of such conflicts.

With Namibia's accession to independence, the Special Committee had hoped that the challenges facing it with regard to steering the implementation of the Declaration vis-à-vis the remaining 18 Non-Self-Governing Territories would be of a different nature. However, I must emphasize that there remain some areas of potential conflict or cases where there is the fear that the socio-economic, cultural or human rights of the people concerned may not be respected. There is no doubt that in those cases there will be the need for the active preventive diplomacy you, Mr. Secretary-General, so wisely emphasized to monitor the development of crises and to find adequate means to defuse them and prevent their escalation.

(The Chairman)

Our Committee remains concerned at the delay in the implementation of the Settlement Plan for Western Sahara. It is our earnest hope that restraint will prevail and that the indispensable climate of confidence is rebuilt. Such a climate of trust is essential to the progress we all seek in the search for a just and definitive solution of the question of Western Sahara.

We also continue to support the holding of consultations, as well as negotiations which are under way among the Member States concerned, regarding Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

The mandate of our Committee was strengthened yet another time by the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 46/181, entitled "International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism", by which it declared that the ultimate goal of the Decade is the free exercise of the right to self-determination by the peoples of each and every one of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories in accordance with the Declaration and all other relevant resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly.

The General Assembly further declared that exercise of the right to self-determination should be carried out freely and without outside pressure, in a form reflecting the authentic interests and aspirations of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and with the United Nations playing an appropriate role.

The General Assembly also adopted a Plan of Action outlining measures and activities that should be undertaken by the relevant parties concerned with the decolonization process, including the Special Committee.

The 18 Territories which now remain the focus of the Special Committee are, for the most part, small island Territories in the Pacific and Caribbean regions characterized by small populations with limited resources. However,

(The Chairman)

it is essential to reaffirm that the basic principles of the Declaration remain applicable to them. It is also essential to take into account the special needs and specific conditions of these Territories within a realistic framework which must evolve in a climate of cooperation and genuine desire to find a solution to the specific problems of those Territories.

The General Assembly ensured this when it adopted its resolution 1541 (XV) of 15 December 1960, the day after it adopted its historic Declaration on decolonization. This important resolution sets out clearly the political options that could be chosen by the peoples of colonial Territories and also specifies that the adoption of any of those options - be it emergence as a sovereign State, free association with an independent State or integration with an independent State - should be the result of a free and voluntary choice by the peoples of the Territories concerned.

I can assure all concerned that the Committee shall fulfil its tasks with an open mind. I, myself, come from a region where each of the options indicated by General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV) have proven to be viable.

The Special Committee will continue to report on the social, economic and political advancement of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and mobilize international support for and assistance to the populations concerned. Accelerated economic and social development can only contribute to the speedy realization of the goals outlined in the Plan of Action. But this objective cannot be achieved without the active participation of the administering Powers in our work; thus we wish to enhance our cooperation and dialogue with the administering Powers.

We deem it important that the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and their representatives participate in the work of the Committee and establish a regular dialogue with the United Nations, thereby ensuring

(The Chairman)

that the international community will be aware of their views and aspirations concerning their specific circumstances and their future.

We therefore request the administering Powers to continue their cooperation by providing the United Nations with up-to-date information on each Territory in accordance with Article 73 e of the Charter and to invite United Nations visiting missions to the Territories under their administration, so that we may inform ourselves of developments and of the progress of the inhabitants towards self-government and the eventual exercise of self-determination.

The Committee has also continued a process of review of its method of work in the search for greater efficiency. In 1991, the Committee set up a special Working Group to continue the review process, particularly in the light of the recommendations and views expressed by Member States at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly. The recommendations of the Working Group have already begun to be implemented and the impact on our work will be both far reaching and beneficial to our efforts to ensure implementation of the Plan of Action for the Decade adopted by the General Assembly.

I am sure that with your active support, Mr. Secretary-General, and the cooperation of members of the Committee, we, together with the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and with the cooperation of the administering Powers, will be able effectively to implement the Plan of Action, thereby ensuring that the anachronism of colonialism will be relegated to history before the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Before proceeding to the next item on the agenda of the meeting, I should like, once again, to thank the Secretary-General for opening the 1992 session of the Committee.

(The Chairman)

I request members of the Committee to remain seated while I escort the Secretary-General from the Trusteeship Council chamber.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/AC.109/L.1774 and L.1775)

The CHAIRMAN: Members have before them, in document A/AC.109/L.1774, a note by the Secretary-General, in which he draws the attention of members to the relevant resolutions and decisions on our work during 1992.

Members also have before them a note prepared by me, in document A/AC.109/L.1775, containing suggestions on the manner in which the Committee may wish to organize its work for the year.

As regards the suggestions contained in paragraphs 1 and 2 of the note, it appears that members are in agreement that the Committee maintain its Working Group and the newly formed Subcommittee on Small Territories, Petitions, Information and Assistance. If I hear no objection, it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: As consultations have not yet been concluded in respect of the membership and the officers of these subsidiary bodies, the Committee will take action thereon at its next meeting.

Paragraphs 3 and 4 of my note relate to the suggested allocation of items and procedure for consideration. As will be noted, most of these suggestions are based on views expressed at last year's session in this Committee, which, I believe, will facilitate the effective discharge of our task this year.

Mr. JENIE (Indonesia): At the outset, I should like to extend the Indonesian delegation's congratulations to you, Sir, a representative of a neighbouring State with which Indonesia enjoys fraternal relations, on your election as Chairman of the Special Committee. It is indeed a recognition of the leadership and diplomatic skill you showed when you guided the work of the Sub-committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance. My delegation is convinced that you will lead the work of this session of the Special Committee to a successful conclusion.

We should also like to tender our congratulations to the other officers of the Committee.

Let me first say that it is with deep regret that my delegation finds this item once again on the agenda of the Special Committee. Although we have on past occasions expressed Indonesia's position on the so-called question of East Timor, I would like once again to state our position on the subject.

First and foremost is the fact that the people of East Timor have freely exercised their legitimate right to self-determination in full accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions. The outcome was a clear and undeniable desire to integrate East Timor with the Republic of Indonesia. The principles and goals which this Committee seeks to uphold were fully respected, bringing a conclusion to a long history of colonialism in Indonesia.

(Mr. Jenie, Indonesia)

Throughout the transition of East Timor from an oppressed people under colonial power for four centuries to its ultimate freedom with the Republic of Indonesia, the United Nations has been kept informed. Therefore, to maintain that East Timor has not yet exercised the right to self-determination is in effect to reject the will of the people expressed 16 years ago and reaffirmed in every general election held subsequently. It undermines the democratic process and, furthermore, contradicts the very purposes for which this Committee was established; and it would set a precedent whereby the exercise of the right to self-determination is to be reviewed and reaffirmed many years after the fact.

Since integration with Indonesia, the people of East Timor have enjoyed political, economic, social and cultural development unknown to them for centuries. In every manner, the quality of life of the people in East Timor has improved in such areas as education, health care, nutrition, housing and infrastructure. Yet East Timor has had only 16 years of freedom in which to correct the effects of a colonial era characterized by neglect and the absence of development.

Much remains to be done. It is pertinent to note that, during the next fiscal year, the allocation of the state budget for development efforts in East Timor has been increased by 35.1 per cent. Indeed, while much remains to be done, much has already been accomplished, most importantly by the attainment of freedom from the colonial yoke and by the significant improvement of the people's well-being.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that the right to self-determination of the people of East Timor has been exercised, and their decision to integrate with the Republic of Indonesia must be respected. My

(Mr. Jenie, Indonesia)

delegation, therefore, strongly rejects the inclusion of the item on the Committee's agenda.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to assure the representative of Indonesia that the reservations he has expressed will be fully reflected in the verbatim record of this meeting.

I now call on the representative of Portugal.

Mr. RIBEIRO-TELLES (Portugal): First of all, the Portuguese delegation would like to congratulate Ambassador Lohia of Papua New Guinea on his election as Chairman of the Special Committee; we also congratulate the other officers of the Committee.

I would also like to greet in particular the former Acting Chairman, Ambassador Ricardo Alarcon de Quesada, for the contribution he personally made to decolonization matters during his long experience as representative of his country to the United Nations, recalling the work this Committee has undertaken during the last decade in upholding the rights of colonial peoples and in promoting the attainment of a full measure of self-government for them in accordance with the Charter and the fundamental principles and resolutions of this Organization.

Allow me to make some brief remarks on what has just been said by the representative of Indonesia concerning the question of East Timor. We cannot see how it can be claimed that East Timor has ceased to be an issue of decolonization or self-determination. The item is included in the agenda of both the General Assembly and the Special Committee. The Security Council has remained seized of this matter since December 1975. This means that the United Nations does not recognize the process of decolonization as having been completed.

Recent events in East Timor - I am referring particularly to the Santa

(Mr. Ribeiro-Telles, Portugal)

Cruz massacre that took place in November of last year - have come to demonstrate in the most tragic manner that the root causes of the tragedy of the East Timorese people is undoubtedly the denial of a basic human right - the right to self-determination that is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. This right has been consistently violated by Indonesia's military invasion of the Territory and permanent repression of the will of its people.

The real question is how to assure the East Timorese the exercise of their rights, considered to be inalienable by all relevent United Nations resolutions. The question has yet to be settled, since the United Nations has rightly refused to recognize the validity of the present status quo and East Timor is still considered a Non-Self-Governing Territory.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on the representative of New Zealand.

Mr. O'BRIEN (New Zealand): I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election, and to assure the Committee through you that New Zealand as an administering Power will continue to cooperate with the Committee as it has done in the past. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau.

I should just like to refer very briefly, Sir, to your Note, of which you made mention in your introductory remarks, and in particular to the reference in the annex, on page 6, to the question of visiting missions. I should like to inform the Committee that, in relation to the reference to the possibility of a United Nations visiting mission to Tokelau, the question of a visiting mission to Tokelau is to be discussed by the elected Tokelauan representatives in their Parliament, the General Fono, at their meeting scheduled for April. We will convey to the Committee the views of the elected representatives and the Tokelauan leaders and chiefs during the course of the Sub-committee's hearings on Tokelau at a later time.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the Permanent Representative of New Zealand for his important statement, which will be duly reflected in the record. I also thank his Government for its cooperation with the Special Committee's work over many long years. I hope that this year the Special Committee will not lack the participation of the Western European Group and that New Zealand and others will encourage their colleagues to consider their participation in the important work of the Special Committee. I should like, however, to express particular thanks to New Zealand for its continued support of the Special Committee, both as an administering Power and as a member of the United Nations.

If there are no further comments, may I consider that members approve the suggestions made earlier, it being understood that appropriate modifications may be made as developments so warrant?

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: Members are aware that, owing to the various activities envisaged in connection with the Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism this year, our meeting programme may be fairly heavy, in particular in view of the holding of a regional seminar away from Headquarters. With that in mind, I wish to remind members that, in accordance with the programme of meetings for the year approved by the General Assembly, the Sub-Committee is scheduled to meet between March and June to complete consideration of the items allocated to it for review and report. I wish to request the Sub-Committee to make optimum use of the limited time available to it.

As regards the Special Committee's plenary meetings, the complexity of the tasks to be accomplished this year require a great deal of flexibility and constant adjustment to circumstances that may arise as we make progress in

(The Chairman)

our informal consultations. Therefore, as we did last year, we will hold plenary meetings whenever necessary to take decisions formally on a number of pending issues.

Members will recall, indeed, that one of the conclusions of the open-ended working group established by the Special Committee last year to make suggestions on the rationalization of the work of the Special Committee was that reform in this fast-changing international context should be a continuing process. Many events have occurred since the open-ended working group concluded its work in May of last year. I therefore suggest that an open-ended working group similar to the one of last year be established to continue the work started at that time.

Should members agree with that suggestions, the Special Committee may wish to entrust that group with the responsibility for making recommendations on how to improve further the efficiency of work in the light of recent events and bearing in mind all suggestions made in the Fourth Committee and the General Assembly during the forty-sixth session.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Special Committee agrees in principle to establish such a working group, with the understanding that the group's mandate would be further considered at our next meeting, in addition to other pending matters.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: As I stated earlier, I intend to continue informal consultations with Committee members and other parties concerned on a number of pending questions. I hope that those consultations, together with our discussions in the open-ended working group, will considerably facilitate our work when the time comes to begin our summer meetings.

(The Chairman)

As approved by the General Assembly, and in order to allow the Secretariat and the Rapporteur sufficient time to prepare the Special Committee's report to the General Assembly, we will endeavour to hold plenary meetings in July and to conclude our work by the end of that month.

In respect to paragraph 6 of my note, consultations have already begun in connection with the seminar to be held away from Headquarters, as envisaged under the Plan of Action. I shall keep members up to date on the progress made in that connection.

As members are aware, the Special Committee annually reviews additional measures that might possibly be taken to curtail its documentation requirements. Bearing in mind the substantial progress made to date in this regard, I would ask members to continue to exercise their initiative in cooperating fully with the efforts of the Organization.

At this time, I should like to draw members' attention to paragraphs 9 to 11 of my note, relating to the utilization of conference-servicing resources. As indicated in the note, as its forty-sixth session the General Assembly waived rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly to permit meetings to be declared open and debate to proceed without the presence of the quorum required under those rules. It is therefore my intention to convene the meetings of the Committee at the scheduled time in order to make the maximum use of the services available to it. I am confident that I shall receive the full cooperation of all members in this regard.

I now call upon the representative of Cuba.

Mr. ALARCON de QUESADA (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): First, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to serve as Chairman of the Special Committee. We have already had occasion to work with you in the Special Committee and elsewhere in the United Nations. Aware of the important contribution you made in leading the Special Committee last year and in representing the Special Committee with great distinction at important international meetings, we are convinced that your many personal and professional qualities will enable you to discharge fully the important responsibilities we have unanimously appointed you to bear. In that endeavour you can count upon our full cooperation, both as officers and as members of the Special Committee.

I should also like to thank the members of the Special Committee for having re-elected us to serve as one of the Vice-Chairmen. Let them rest assured that we will endeavour to continue to fulfil what we view as the clear obligation incumbent upon all of us who represent States that have decided to participate in the activities of the Special Committee, which was established by the General Assembly precisely to ensure that the purposes and principles clearly set forth in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) are fully and faithfully respected. Those of us who have responsibilities in the Special Committee have an obligation to the General Assembly to do our utmost to ensure that those objectives are achieved as soon as possible, as prescribed by the Assembly, and that the next century will be one in which colonialism in all its forms and manifestations will have been completely eradicated.

(Mr. Alarcon de Quesada, Cuba)

Once again I thank the members of the Special Committee for having done me the honour of electing me. I also wish to express my appreciation to the representative of Portugal for his kind words. Our own experience has shown us the interest, seriousness and concern Portugal has devoted to the work of the Special Committee. We believe that Portugal and New Zealand, which have honoured us with their presence at this inaugural meeting, have set an example which, if followed by all the other administering Powers, will enable the Special Committee to meet its responsibilities fully.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the Permanent Representative of Cuba for the kind remarks he addressed to me.

I should also like particularly to thank him most warmly for his contribution to the Committee's work for the past year, and I look forward to working with him again.

Mr. SLABY (Czechoslovakia): Mr. Chairman, first of all allow me to offer you, on behalf of the delegation of Czechoslovakia and on my own behalf, our most sincere congratulations on your election to the post of Chairman of the Special Committee. Your election shows, without a doubt, the high esteem in which members of the Committee hold you for the efficiency, energy and wisdom you showed during last year, when we were given the opportunity to follow your work in the chair of the Subcommittee on Petitions, Information and Assistance, as well as when you were guiding the Committee's Working Group.

It is also my pleasure to congratulate my colleagues, members of the Bureau of the Committee, on their elections as Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur. I wish them success in their responsible posts, and assure them that the delegation of Czechoslovakia will, for its part, exert every effort to cooperate with them.

It is a great honour and a privilege for me to convey thanks for the confidence expressed in my country and in me by my re-election to the post of Vice-Chairman of the Committee of 24. At the same time, I should like to express my delegation's appreciation of the work of the outgoing members of the Bureau, and to the whole delegation of Norway for the valuable contributions they made to our work in past years.

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

The Committee on decolonization achieved some success last year. The Working Group, which I have already mentioned, was established and, subsequently, the two Subcommittees were merged into a single organ. The so-called omnibus resolution on 10 small Territories was adopted. Minor improvements were made in some draft resolutions prepared by the Committee of 24, and, finally, the wordings of the original drafts that the Committee adopted last year went rather further than before. We cannot, however, deny that last year's results from the Committee are also contradictory; though the merger of the two Subcommittees can be considered a useful step, it is of only procedural importance, for it does not affect the agenda, which was also merged in a mechanical manner, and it does not address the content of the issues under discussion.

A casual observer might easily get the impression that the work of the Committee of 24 in 1991 was concentrated wholely on defending practically the same, old-style draft resolutions. The texts followed outdated formulas and were couched in a stereotyped manner. The conclusions arrived at last year were practically the same as those of the previous year. The resolutions were outdated and contained excessively harsh criticism, were confrontational in nature, and did not reflect developments in the world or in the regions concerned, least of all in southern Africa. They contained long-abandoned language, useless and selective name-calling of some States, and reflected, in many cases, the fact that the Committee of 24 is used by some States as a platform for presenting their political objectives.

We applaud the fact that the Committee's texts have gone further in some aspects, but they have done so far less than the world has. Recently, the Committee set out on a journey away from last year's crossroads. We recognize

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

that, but it has set out in this direction very, very slowly. We are thinking of what could be done with the Committee: there is a lot to do, not less than was the case at this time last year.

Czechoslovakia is especially in favour of a greater concentration of the sessions of the Committee of 24 and of its Subcommittee, and of a reduction in their number; of a smaller package of effective recommendations to be submitted to the General Assembly; and of decisions and resolutions which would be made more streamlined by deleting out-of-date and extraneous provisions. It would be to the point, in our view, to cut the funds allocated for the activities of the Commitee of 24 below the 1989 level; to decrease the total number of meetings, both of the Committee and of the Subcommittee; to limit the number of documents; to restrict participation by petitioners to the representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories; and to impose curbs on the funds provided for these purposes.

Those proposals, and there are many others, must be considered responsibly, and we should like to start considering them as soon as possible. New impulse will undoubtedly be given by the new Chairman, and in this connection my delegation welcomes the decision we have just taken on re-establishing the open-ended Working Group.

For some years now my delegation has been expressing a certain degree of criticism of the work of the United Nations bodies dealing with decolonization, but it has also been constantly reiterating its position on decolonization as a phenomenon. Let me state once again that Czechoslovakia remains constant in its view that decolonization is one of the irreplaceable aims of the United Nations. We do not want to remove the decolonization agenda from the United Nations programme before colonialism, in all its

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

manifestations, is eliminated. Quite the opposite is true: Czechoslovakia's active participation, since the founding of the United Nations, has been aimed at contributing to the denunciation of colonialism and racism as practices that violate the rules of international behaviour and prevent peoples subjected to those practices from exercising the right to self-determination enshrined in the United Nations Charter and in historic General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), bearing in mind also resolution 1541 (XV).

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of Czechoslovakia for his kind words addressed to me.

I am quite sure that the members of the Committee are fully aware of the issues that have been raised, and that this is the task before the Committee for this year once again.

Mr. BANGALI (Sierra Leone): It gives my delegation, and me personally, great pleasure and satisfaction to see you, a seasoned diplomat from a country with which Sierra Leone maintains close relations, elected unanimously as Chairman of our Committee. It is not only a confirmation of our confidence in your ability, but also an indication of the greater focus with which we must now embark on the issues relating to the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Equally, our congratulations go to the Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur, whose elections will greatly enhance our work this year. It is in this regard that I should like to express my delegation's gratitude over the confidence members of the Special Committee have seen fit to repose in us by electing Sierra Leone as Vice-Chairman. I wish to assure the members of the Special Committee that my delegation will discharge this trust faithfully and impartially, and pledges its cooperation in dealing with the tasks ahead of us.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of Sierra Leone for his kind words addressed to me.

I am quite sure that the Committee is aware of Africa's contribution to and leadership in decolonization, and we welcome this partnership, which will continue in the Bureau.

COOPERATION WITH INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

The CHAIRMAN: Before adjourning, I wish to draw members' attention to an invitation received to the 57th session of the Organization of African Unity Co-ordinating Committee for the Liberation of Africa, to be held at Arusha from 19 to 20 February 1992.

As regards invitations extended to the Committee, I would suggest that the Committee authorize me to hold consultations, as appropriate, concerning its participation or otherwise at these and other meetings, as well as the level of representation when accepting invitations.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: The next meeting of the Committee will be announced in the Journal of the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.